

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MASERU 01044 151359Z
ACTION AID-59

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 HA-05 EB-08 COME-00 IO-13
DOTE-00 OES-07 L-03 SS-15 SP-02 /123 W
-----104466 151405Z /72

P 151000Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY MASERU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8658
INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MBABANE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L MASERU 1044

MBABANE FOR OSARAC

NAIROBI FOR REDSO

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID, LT
SUBJECT: LESOTHO SOUTHERN PERIMETER ROAD

REF: MBABANE 1581,

1. REFTEL SETS FORTH QTE REASONS UNQTE FOR OSARAC ACCEPTANCE OF DOLS 25 MILLION FUNDING LEVEL FOR LESOTHO SOUTHERN PERIMETER ROAD. MASERU WAS NOT RPT NOT CONSULTED AND WE DO NOT ACCEPT THESE PURPORTED JUSTIFICATIONS FOR FUNDING LIMITATION. WE FIND IT ODD INDEED THAT OSARAC'S REASONS FOR ACCEPTING DOLS 25 MILLION FUNDING CEILING ARE BASED ON VIEWS OF OFFICIALS OF OTHER GOVTS AND AN UNATTRIBUTED ALLUSION TO CRYING WOLF. THESE OBSERVATIONS ARE FLIMSY AT BEST AND IRRELEVANT TO THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RATIONALE ON WHICH THE PROJECT IS BASED.

2. WITH RESPECT TO GOS VIEWS (PARA 2A REFTEL) ON U.S. ASSISTANCE LEVELS FOR LESOTHO, IT IS UNSEEMLY THAT OSARAC WOULD CITE GOS SOUR GRAPES AMONG QTE REASONS UNQTE FOR ITS ACCEPTANCE OF FUNDING
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LIMITATION FOR COMPLETION OF VITAL INTERIOR ROAD CONNECTION IN LESOTHO WHICH HAS BEEN SUBJECT OF MORE THAN ONE YEAR'S INTENSIVE NEGOTIATIONS AND JUST-CONCLUDED FEASIBILITY STUDY. IT IS UNTHINKABLE THAT INTERNATIONAL DONOR COMMUNITY WOULD HAVE COME TO ASSISTANCE OF LESOTHO AS IT HAS IF QTE SHRILL APPEALS UNQTE WERE THE ONLY MOTIVATION. WHILE GOL STATEMENTS AT TIMES HAVE BEEN COUCHED IN EXAGGERATED TERMS, THE FACT REMAINS THAT THIS POOR,

TINY COUNTRY IS IN A HIGHLY VULNERABLE POSITION AND NEEDS OUR ASSISTANCE. LESOTHO'S APPEAL FOR SUPPORT HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE WESTERN WORLD AND THE DONOR COMMUNITY. THIS EMBASSY KNOWS OF NO RPT NO OTHER DONOR GOVT OR AGENCY THAT IS TALKING ABOUT LIMITING PROJECT FUNDING FOR LESOTHO BECAUSE ANOTHER AID RECIPIENT GOVT HAS EXPRESSED MISGIVINGS, AND IT WOULD INDEED BE ODD IF THE USG WERE TO DO SO. GOS VIEWS ON U.S. AID TO LESOTHO IF NOT IRRELEVANT HAVE LITTLE TO DO WITH THE QTE REASONS UNQTE FOR ACCEPTING OR NOT RPT NOT ACCEPTING DOLS 25 MILLION FY 78 FUNDING LEVEL.

3. RE PARA 2B REFTEL, GOB VIEWS ON AID TO LESOTHO IN LIGHT OF GOL HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD MAY BE MORE TO THE POINT. STILL, HOWEVER, CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAS MADE CLEAR THAT U.S. ASSISTANCE IS TO BE CONSIDERED ON CASE BY CASE BASIS WITH HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE AS ONLY ONE CRITERION TO BE FACTORED IN. THAT GOL HR RECORD HAS NOT BEEN UP TO THAT OF GOB IS UNFORTUNATELY TRUE BUT IT STRIKES ONE AGAIN THAT THIS IS A DUBIOUS QTE REASON UNQTE FOR ACCEPTING FUNDING LIMITATION ON LESOTHO SOUTHERN PERIMETER ROAD.

4. FINALLY, THERE IS OSARAC ASSERTION THAT LESOTHO HAS USED POLITICAL APPEAL EXCESSIVELY AND HAS QTE CRIED WOLF UNQTE TOO OFTEN. GOL APPEAL FOR ASSISTANCE HAS CERTAINLY BEEN BASED ON POLITICAL/ECONOMIC THREAT OF SOUTH AFRICA'S BANTUSTAN POLICY PARTICULARLY AS REFLECTED BY CREATION OF AN APARTHEID ENTITY (TRANSKEI) ON SOUTHERN BORDER OF LESOTHO. THE SOUTHERN
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PERIMETER ROAD IS A DIRECT RESPONSE TO THE BORDER SITUATION CREATED BY SOUTH AFRICAN AND IS INTENDED TO OPEN A DURABLE INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS ROUTE THAT WILL AVOID TRADITIONAL ROUTE THROUGH RSA.

5. THIS EMBASSY REJECTS ALL THE FOREGOING FLIMSY AND MISDIRECTED REASONS FOR ACCEPTING A FUNDING LIMITATION ON CONSTRUCTION OF THE ROAD. IF THERE IS ANY REASON FOR ACCEPTING SUCH A LIMITATION, IT IS THAT THERE IS A REAL LACK OF ADDITIONAL FUNDING IN FY 78. AND, IF THAT BE THE CASE, WE NEED TO TURN EVERY STONE TO FIND ANOTHER WAY TO COMPLETE THE ROAD AS WE AGREED TO DO. WE ACCEPTED THE GOL REQUEST TO BUILD THIS ROAD IF IT PROVED FEASIBLE. IT HAS BEEN PROVEN EMINENTLY FEASIBLE SO THAT WE NOW HAVE A PERFECTLY GOOD ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATION FOR BUILDING A ROAD THAT HAS A FIRST CLASS POLITICAL JUSTIFICATION. IF WE CAN'T FIND THE MONEY, MORE'S THE PITY THAT WE NOW HAVE TO RENEGE. BUT WE SHOULD NOT SETTLE FOR THE TRIO OF DOUBIOUS REASONS OFFERED BY OSARAC IN REFTEL.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT AID RESPOND TO GOL PLEDGE OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (MASERU 1040) BY FINDING AN ADDITIONAL ONE MILLION DOLLARS TO FINANCE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PORTION OF THE ROAD FROM QUTHING TO QACHA'S NEK.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, HIGHWAYS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MASERU01044
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780205-0278
Format: TEL
From: MASERU
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780559/aaaabxrf.tel
Line Count: 117
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 0d861c9f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AID
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 MBABANE 1581
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2690219
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LESOTHO SOUTHERN PERIMETER ROAD
TAGS: EAID, ELTN, LT, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/0d861c9f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014